

Apprenticeship loans ‘in line for the chop’

Rebecca Cooney
@RebeccaKCooney
FE Week exclusive

The troubled 24+ advanced learning loans system for apprenticeships could be axed after just 404 people applied for funding since April’s launch, *FE Week* can reveal.

The future of the system is, according to an *FE Week* source, being “considered” by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Latest figures, released last month, showed that of the 52,468 *FE* loan applications up to October 31, less than 1 per cent were for apprenticeships. It appeared well off target for the government forecasts of 25,000 applications for apprenticeship loans this academic year (by July 31, 2014).

A BIS spokesperson said: “Application numbers indicate that employers and learners are not engaging with loans in apprenticeships.

“We are keeping a close watch on the data and consider the implications for the apprenticeship programme but no decisions have been taken.”

Those who have already successfully applied for a loan, *FE Week* understands, could be in line for to get their loan written off if the system was abolished.

Shadow Skills Minister Liam Byrne said: “It’s about time we got to the bottom of why the government is missing its target for supporting adults who are trying to improve their lives, by an unbelievable 90 per cent.

“It’s crucial we back these learners and not leave them in the lurch. So let’s so have some answers fast.”

News of the possible rethink comes after repeated warnings from the likes of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) about the number of apprenticeship loan applications.

A spokesperson for AELP said: “This

would be very welcome news for the apprenticeship programme.

“Ministers have long said that they want to see more progression within apprenticeships from level two to higher levels and the problem is that loans are acting as a barrier to adults who want to move on to an advanced or high apprenticeship.

The National Union of Students (NUS) has also been a long-standing critic of the system, including through its No to *FE* fees campaign. It claimed the system risked putting people off studying and had grave impacts for those aged 24 above who undertake a higher level apprenticeship taking out a loan of up to several thousand pounds so they could essentially pay to work.

Toni Pearce, NUS president, said: “This is certainly welcome news. We have been committed to campaigning against the introduction of HE-styled loans for students in *FE* aged 24 and over studying at level three and above ever since this entirely wrong-headed proposal was first put forward.”

She added: “We would urge that this policy is scrapped in its totality as a matter of priority, and call on government to invest in the highly-skilled workforce we need.”

Chris Jones, chief executive of City & Guilds, said: “There were always concerns around 24+ loans, even before they were introduced.

“As we said in our response to the Autumn Statement, too much bureaucracy can be detrimental to the education system, and particularly where apprenticeships are concerned.

“This is just another example of where bureaucracy has had a negative impact on the system as a whole. What we need to see is stability. There have been so many changes and developments in policy of late.

“All this flip-flopping about with policies is damaging to our education system as and, most importantly, damaging to our learners.”



National Citizens Service students dressed in festive costumes for the leg waxing event

Hair-raising for festive fundraisers

Festive fundraisers from City of Bath College collected hundreds of pounds for good causes.

Learners on two-month National Citizen Service (NCS) courses organised a series of fundraising events, including a football tournament, bingo and a sponsored walk.

Brave male students, including 16-year-old Dan Arbury, also had their legs waxed.

They raised more than £300 for good causes including MacMillan Cancer Support and Rainbow Children’s Hospice.

Louise Croft, the college’s information and guidance co-ordinator, said: “The groups of students all came up with their own ideas to help make a positive impact on their communities.”

Cut to 18-year-old funding rate branded ‘dangerous’

Rebecca Cooney
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Providers stand to have a huge hole blown in their finances after the government announced it would slash the funding rate for full-time 18-year-old learners by 17.5 per cent in 2014/15.

The sudden announcement by the govern-

ment was branded “extraordinary” and a “real danger” by House of Commons Education Select Committee member Nic Dakin. It was also condemned by *FE* groups such as the Association of Colleges (AoC), the 157 Group, the National Union of Students, the Sixth Form Colleges Association and the Association of School and College Leaders.

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Top education funding cut tweets:



@ipryce

What's the difference between a turkey and an 18 year old FE student? There isn't, both are being well and truly stuffed this Christmas



@MattAtkinson1

Surely the brutal 17.5% govt cut to funding for 18 yr olds means proper progs of study are now just for 16-17 year olds?



@mikehopkinsmc

Disappointing no response from Labour but they feel they can't commit to spending.



@OldDitch For every 1 in a

school 6th form affected there are 5 in FE colleges - a cut focussed on the forgotten 50%



@shanechowen

Would be riots on the street if it was HE

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continued from the front...

A letter from the Education Funding Agency said the decision had been made as those who were 18 years old at the start of the academic year "will already have benefited from two years of post-16 education and will not therefore need as much non-qualification provision within their study programmes as 16 and 17-year-olds."

It continued: "Fewer than one in five of 16 to 18-year-olds funded by the EFA are aged 18 at the start of the academic year."

However, colleges have reacted angrily, saying the move was tantamount to penalising the most vulnerable learners as those still in education at 18 are likely to have been let down by the system in the past.

Colleges are struggling to calculate the financial impact this will have as the new rate for 16 and 17-year-olds will not be announced until March. But, using rough estimates, Middlesbrough College, Bedford College and Milton Keynes College said they could be forced to offer the same amount of provision for around half a million pounds less, while Uxbridge College could lose up to £800,000.

Ian Pryce (pictured top), principal of Bedford College, said: "There are two groups that you couldn't blame for the fact that somebody is behind at 18.

"One of those is the institution that took them on after they hadn't done well at school and the second is the student themselves that have been let down and they're the two parties this will penalise."

He also pointed out that the rate cut would affect other students as it would be "impossible" to reduce provision solely for 18-year-old students as they would be in classes alongside their younger counterparts.

"The cohort this affects are definitely, operationally, and organisationally are part and parcel of our post-16 offer so in effect it is a just a funding cut,"

he said. He also questioned why the sector had not been told of the coming rate cut at the AoC conference in November.

Mr Dakin (pictured bottom), who is trying to table an emergency debate on the subject in the House of Commons, said: "It's quite extraordinary... it's just come out of the blue."

He dismissed the agency's justification as "a clever intellectual reason that has no relationship with what's happening in the real world".

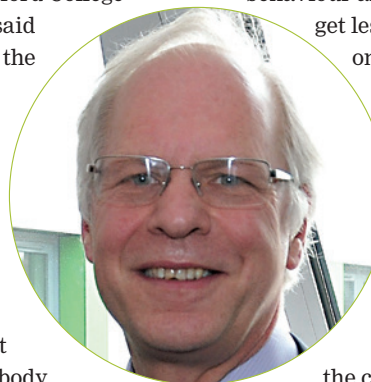
"The real danger is that it will change behaviour and the youngsters colleges get less funding for may also be the ones that need the most support," he said.

"It's an extremely bad time to be making life harder for 18-year-olds, what we should be doing is putting ladders in place for them to success not putting barriers in their way."

Despite the backlash against the cut, Labour declined to

condemn the move. Shadow Education Secretary Tristram Hunt said: "We are going to monitor the situation, but we don't think it is appropriate to make statements on individual cuts at this stage."

See editorial on page 6



Agency probe looms over troubled college

Paul Offord

@PaulOfford

The Skills Funding Agency is poised to investigate as it awaits the results of a Newham College investigation into claims it awarded qualifications to students who never took courses.

The agency said it "reserved the right" to probe further if it was not satisfied with the college investigation into allegations that passes had been awarded to students who did not attend any lectures, or had attendance rates of 40 per cent or less — which former lecturers allegedly said should be "impossible".

It is understood the college, which received an Ofsted rating of good in March this year, was investigating the claims, but had not seen the evidence on which a BBC report, in which the claims were made, was based.

An agency spokesperson told FE Week: "The college governing body has informed us of the steps it is taking to investigate these matters. We expect to receive the findings from this investigation shortly.

"We reserve the right to require or carry out further investigation if we are dissatisfied with the robustness of the college's own investigations."

Agency funding for most college courses is dependent on the number of students who achieve a pass.

A college spokesperson said: "As a high-performing and well-regarded college, we take any allegation of malpractice very seriously, and we are keen to investigate any issues raised with us."

The allegations follow the posting of a video on YouTube on November 17, which featured dance and drama head Dr Mark Walcott seeming to make vile claims about gay teachers during a staff meeting early last year.

Principal Denise Brown-Sackey announced she was taking leave having consulted with governors about the video.

It is understood that an eight-month internal investigation had already taken place into Dr Walcott, but no action was taken until the clip went online.

The college confirmed he has now been suspended while an "independent"

FE Week news in brief

Website 'misrepresents'

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) issued a warning to a businessman who tried to charge young people £25 each to register for apprenticeships.

Matthew Peck launched the Apprenticeships Portal website in November, but was forced to close it following complaints.

Anyone who subsequently typed in the web address was diverted to the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) website. An SFA spokesman told FE Week it was writing to Mr Peck to warn him linking his website to NAS "amounted to a misrepresentation".

The link no longer exists.

Have a say on tech

An online forum is being launched to collect views on how to integrate technology into teaching.

The department for Business, Innovation and Skills has been asking FE representatives and technology experts through the Further Education Learning and Technology Action Group (FELTAG) for with recommendations on how to modernise teaching.

It now wants to collect a wider range of views through the online forum at feltag.org.uk which will stay open until the end of January.

AGE grant extended

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has decided to extend apprenticeship grants for employers of 16 to 24-year-olds to December next year.

It said this followed "positive findings" from its evaluation of how the grants are working.

A report described the findings of research, which involved talking with participating employers, government agencies and training organisations involved in the administration of the grant.

investigation is carried out into his behavior. Nevertheless, the latest allegations have seen the storm surrounding the college continue.

A Newham Council spokesperson said: "In light of the new allegations, it is important that all details are passed to the agency so it can hold a full investigation.

"We are concerned not only that public money is spent appropriately, but also that anyone studying hard knows their efforts are worthwhile and that their qualifications are seen as credible by employers, colleges, universities and by the students themselves."



Ex-international footballer barred over apprenticeship claims

Chris Henwood

@Chris_Henwood

A former Welsh international footballer is one of four men to have been disqualified from being company directors after their sports apprenticeship firm submitted invalid funding claims.

Mark Aizlewood (pictured), aged 54, who played for Wales 39 times between 1986 and 1994, was barred from directorships for six years for failing to comply with apprenticeship rules with his training provider, Luis Michael Training Limited (LMT).

The Newport-based firm enrolled, assessed and verified apprenticeships for young people at football clubs such as Leeds, Millwall and Nottingham Forest. It worked as a subcontractor for eight FE colleges including Sparsholt College and South Thames College.

Aizlewood's co-directors Paul Sugrue, 53, also a former professional footballer, 41-year-old Keith Anthony Williams and 49-year-old Christopher Paul Martin were also disqualified from directorships — for six, six-and-a-half and eight years, respectively.

The disqualifications follow an investigation by the Insolvency Service that established the men failed to ensure the company — which is currently under investigation by the Serious Fraud Office — complied with funding guidance and failed to ensure

that adequate documentation was maintained and/or supplied to colleges to support the funding claims they made, placing the company at risk of being held liable to repay funding totalling at least £3,442,809.

Ken Beasley, Insolvency Service official receiver of Public Interest Unit (Manchester), said: "This company received millions of pounds in government funding, but failed to provide sufficient evidence to support claims for funding or to demonstrate that the company had complied with funding guidance which was readily available to them."

"The various failures of the four directors constitute behaviour that falls far below that



Mark Aizlewood in footballing action for Wales in December 1994. Pic: PA

expected of responsible directors of a limited company."

The Insolvency Service found that in late 2010, one of the colleges LMT dealt with cancelled its contract citing funding anomalies at the subcontractor. An audit by the college's external auditors identified ineligible claims made by LMT.

The audit, plus telephone audits undertaken by colleges to whom LMT provided services, found, among other things, that LMT had submitted ineligible claims for Welsh learners, who have their own funding body; and failed to ensure that all learners were in employment.

It also submitted claims for learners who did not participate in or had withdrawn from the programme; submitted claims for learners who had undertaken prior learning or who were otherwise undertaking additional learning; and submitted claims for learners

outside of the stipulated geographical area specified in contracts.

In light of the problems, the agency required the college to repay funding and the college subsequently sought to reclaim the funds paid to LMT. As LMT was not able to repay the amount, a winding up petition for £2,573,994 was presented by the college and the company was wound up by the court on September 26, 2011.

"The Insolvency Service has strong enforcement powers and will not hesitate to use them to remove directors who have failed to honour their obligations from the business environment," said Mr Beasley.

The Serious Fraud Office (SFO), in conjunction with Gwent Police, is currently investigating the dealings of LMT. The case was accepted in September 2011 following a referral by Gwent Police.

An SFO spokesperson said: "It is suspected that LMT produced false documentation, including registration papers, progress reviews and coaching examination certificates to falsely show to FE colleges and examining boards that training and apprenticeship placements had been successfully achieved and completed."

He added: "The period being investigated spans 2009 to 2011. It is provisionally estimated that the total suspected fraudulent claims made by LMT to a number of colleges is in excess of £1.6m."

Awarding organisations withdraw from group membership body

Rebecca Cooney

@RebeccaKCooney

Six of the country's biggest awarding bodies have withdrawn from the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB).

City & Guilds, Pearson and AQA were among those to leave FAB in a move that will mean they are now solely represented collectively by the Joint Qualification Council (JCQ).

The JCQ is made up of seven awarding bodies, of which just one — SQA — has decided to stay with FAB, which will continue to serve 120 smaller member organisations.

The remaining three to have left FAB were WJEC, CEA and OCR.

A letter, seen by *FE Week*, was sent to stakeholders in both groups announcing the change, which will be effective from January 1.

It said: "We have agreed that, in future, it would be preferable for JCQ to represent solely the collective views of its members."

The move comes just weeks after the Whitehead Review of Vocational Qualifications recommended there should be a cull of qualifications to "de-clutter the market".

Nigel Whitehead, BAE Systems group managing director, told *FE Week* at the time that his review could lead to 95 per cent of the 19,000-plus qualifications being cut and he accepted the move could also lead to smaller awarding bodies going under.

Nevertheless, the joint JCQ and FAB letter said the "new relationship" between the bodies would "bring greater clarity to our work and will strengthen our representation of awarding bodies at a time of considerable change and challenge" and that they would be "working more closely and pro-actively together".

The letter added: "We believe this arrangement will ensure the diverse views and needs of the awarding body community are appropriately represented and communicated effectively to a wide range of stakeholders."

Jill Lanning, FAB chief executive, said the decision was "absolutely not" connected to the findings of the Whitehead review.

A spokesperson for JCQ declined to comment further.

Paul Eeles, chief executive of FAB member ABC Awards said the move would "in no way, shape or form have a negative impact on our business" and would be "good for awarding organisations".

Fellow FAB member NCFE and also supported the arrangement.

David Grailey, NCFE chief executive, said: "We... believe that the move will help us have a stronger collective voice in the sector."

"Overall, this as a positive way forward and the changes are in no way related to the Whitehead Review."

SQA chief executive Janet Brown said the SQA would derive value from both memberships.



Four more accused in new A4e Aspire to Inspire fraud allegations

Chris Henwood

@Chris_Henwood

Four more people have been charged over fraud allegations at welfare-to-work provider A4e.

It brings the total number of accused to 13, including a former administrator and seven former recruiters who were employed across three A4E offices in South East England.

It is alleged that they forged documentation to support fraudulent claims to the Department for Work and Pensions for reward payments, under the Aspire to Inspire programme, which ended in July 2011.

The new charges relate to allegations against quality co-ordinator Sarah Hawkins, operations manager Serge Wyatt, team leader Matthew Hannigan Train and recruiter Hayley Wilson.

They are each charged with one count of conspiracy to make false instruments contrary to section 1(1A) of the Criminal Law Act 1977.

Hawkins, aged 31, of Bagshot, Surrey; Wyatt, 39, of Richmond, Surrey; Hannigan-Train, 29, of Bristol; Wilson, 25, of Springfield in Milton Keynes; are due before Slough Magistrates' Court on January 6.

Former A4E contract manager Ines Cano-Urbe, 37, of Madrid, Spain, also faces the charge and is due at court.

She was one of nine already charged in September, accused of numerous offences,

including conspiracy to defraud and forgery.

Cano-Urbe has been bailed in connection with the earlier charges — one of forgery and one of conspiracy to defraud — to appear at Reading Crown Court on February 3 along with former administrator Zabar Khalil, 34, of Dolphin Road, Slough, who was charged with

five counts of forgery and one count of conspiracy to defraud.

The remaining seven defendants were due at Reading Crown Court on Friday (December 13).

Charles McDonald, recruiter, 43, of Derwent Road, Egham, has been charged with seven counts of forgery, one count of possessing an article for use in fraud and two counts of making articles for use in fraud.

Nikki Foster, recruiter, 30, of High Tree Drive, Reading, was charged with 10 counts of forgery.

Julie Grimes, recruiter, 50, of Monks Way, Staines, was charged with 10 counts of forgery.

Aditi Singh, recruiter, 30, of Elmshott Lane, Slough, was charged with three counts of forgery and one count of possession of an article for use in fraud.

Bindiya Dholiwar, recruiter, 27, of Reddington Drive, Slough, was charged with seven counts of forgery.

Dean Lloyd, recruiter, 36, of Rochfords, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, was charged with 13 counts of forgery.

Yasmin Ahmad, recruiter, 38, of Colchester Road, Southend on Sea, was charged with two counts of forgery.

[Proceeding]



Optimism in Ofsted report comes with warning

Chris Henwood

@Chris_Henwood

Local employer needs are not being met by the FE and skills sector, according to this year's Ofsted annual report.

Despite higher expectations of students and improved teaching and learning providing "grounds for optimism" about the sector, it was delivering "too much provision that is not responsive to local employment needs".

"This provision is therefore inappropriate for young people, regardless of the quality of teaching," said the report, launched on Wednesday (December 11).

It said there was no structure, accountability measure or system of incentives to ensure that FE and skills provision adapted to local economic and social needs.

"If the government is committed to raising employment through better skills and to secure economic competitiveness, it will need to fill this gap in strategic accountability urgently," said the report.

It added: "The ability to judge the true effectiveness of provision will depend, among other things, on the availability of robust data on learners' destinations."

Ofsted director of FE and skills Matthew Coffey told *FE Week*: "The one clear message from this year's annual report is about local accountability. It's about meeting the needs of local employers — that's got to be the number one priority."

"Providers need to look at their curriculum — does it match the local needs and how can you demonstrate that it does?"

The report went on to reveal plans for a review of how provision meets local needs and a Data Dashboard to "ensure governors have accessible data to hold leaders and managers to account".

It also called for greater sector

representation on local enterprise boards (Leps), saying: "Only around one third of all Leps had a direct representative of FE and skills on the Lep board."

Mr Coffey said: "Last year we were very critical about the quality of teaching in particular. It wasn't good enough. It wasn't consistent enough within an individual institution, but across institutions the variability was also marked. We identified 13 providers that were judged to be inadequate and we had no outstanding ones — that was the benchmark of last year."

"And our new inspection framework focussed even more on teaching and learning so I'm delighted that this year we've identified a number of outstanding providers and they've all got outstanding for teaching, learning and assessment. So there are grounds for optimism."

But the report also pointed to a number of large colleges that had fallen from good or outstanding over the last year. Such colleges would include Liverpool, Coventry and Bristol. "These must be a priority for the new FE Commissioner," said the report.

Meanwhile, a review of study programmes, including traineeships as a "bridge to apprenticeships," was also announced in the report, which said apprenticeships were not taking off for young people. "Many young people are applying for an apprenticeship, but are not sufficiently employable," said the report, adding: "Too many providers do not work closely enough with employers and, consequently, apprentices fail to get the right training. This year, we judged 9 per cent of apprenticeship provision to be inadequate — this is far too high."

It continued: "Employers must ... be supported in committing a greater number of apprenticeship places, especially for those under the age of 19."

See feweek.co.uk for an exclusive annual report interview with Mr Coffey.

Reaction from across the FE sector



Skills Minister Matthew Hancock said:

"Ofsted tells us that the skills system is still not responding to local employment needs, which is essential if we are to help not only learners, but also the economy at large. We have announced plans to reform apprenticeships to bring the system closer to employers and we are looking at options for how we can make adult vocational qualifications more responsive."



Shadow Skills Minister Liam Byrne said:

"The only way we will address our regional skills gaps is by ensuring local employers' needs are met. This is why Labour has set out plans for a gold standard Technical Baccalaureate, with businesses accrediting high quality vocational courses. And this is why, I have announced Labour's advisory group on regional skills policy, which will look at how we can set skills funding priorities at the regional level."



Martin Doel, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said:

"Ofsted needs to acknowledge that, as their own research shows, schools are not doing their bit in informing demand through effective careers guidance. New school sixth forms depend on maintaining their head count rather than advising on the best options for the young person. High-quality careers guidance is the key to expanding apprenticeships for young people."

"Giving young people the best opportunity to progress in their careers must be a shared enterprise. The current funding system does not incentivise providers to work together and to plan for local people and employers."



David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, said:

"It is encouraging that there is optimism across the sector and that more providers are performing better than last year. The number of learners in provision graded less than good has fallen from more than a third to a quarter. It is also good to see outstanding provision found in providers of all types: colleges, local authorities and specialist and independent providers."

"However, despite the fall, I am worried that a quarter of learners are in provision graded less than good. This is still far too high."



Lynne Sedgmore, executive director of the 157 Group, said:

"In this era of local autonomy, we welcome Ofsted's acknowledgment of the need for local accountability frameworks and for more effective links with employers and skills needs. We continue to highlight strong college links with employers and Leps — as well as to champion enhanced strategic relationships."



Stewart Segal, Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive, said:

"Independent providers score highly in terms of flexibility of their training and meeting employers' needs. These factors are key to the effective delivery of training and are important elements in the CIF standards. As employers take a more central role in the development of programmes employer responsiveness is an increasingly important factor in the inspection process."



Rob Wall, Confederation of British Industry head of education and employment policy, said:

"The FE sector is a vital part of our education mix in the UK and it's great to see Ofsted report improvement this year. Giving employers greater control over funding will tie provision to industry need and make it more responsive to local economies."

Ofsted on ... sixth form colleges

"The proportion of sixth form colleges judged good or outstanding this year also improved, although the proportion of outstanding sixth form colleges has dropped slightly."

James Kewin, deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges' Association said: "Despite receiving 20 per cent less funding, sixth form colleges also outperform secondary schools, free schools and sponsor-led academies in inspection terms. "However, the report makes no mention of the performance of school and academy sixth forms, and the Sixth Form Colleges' Association believe that now is the time for Ofsted to introduce an inspection grade for them. At present, the overall grade awarded to a school or academy masks the often variable performance of its sixth form."

Ofsted on ... prison education

"The quality of learning and skills work in prisons was poor. It had the largest proportion of inadequate provision across the whole of the FE and skills sector." "Prison regimes often disrupt learning and work-related activities, resulting in poor attendance and punctuality."

Alexandra Marks, chair of the Prisoner Learning Alliance, said: "We believe that Ofsted's announcement today about the poor training and education in prisons, and failure to support ex-prisoners into employment, should act as a wake-up call to the government."

She added: "There must be greater leadership by prison governors and senior staff to prioritise learning."

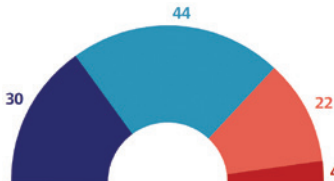
of providers not meeting local economy needs

The Ofsted annual report for the first time includes reports from its regional directors, showing the FE performance across England. The separate analyses of the sector are brought together here, with a taste of how each director sees their regional outcome.



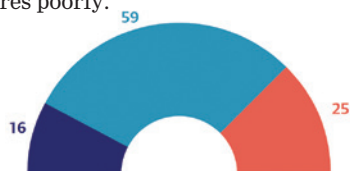
North West
Michael Cladingbowl

“While the North West has the highest proportion of good and outstanding colleges in England, some of the largest providers are failing to provide good education and training.”



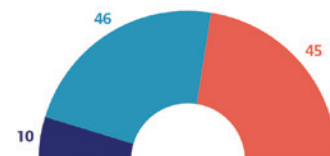
North East, Yorkshire and Humberside
Nick Hudson

“The proportion of good or outstanding colleges is above the national figure. However, work-based learning compares poorly.”



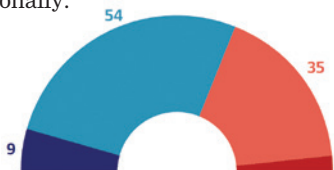
East Midlands
Louise Soden

“Provision in FE and skills is not yet good enough. A third of the provision in the East Midlands requires improvement or is satisfactory. Four out of 10 learners are in provision that is not yet good enough.”



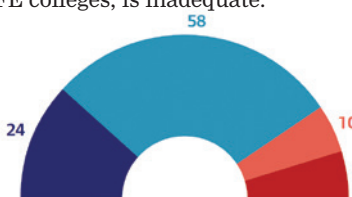
West Midlands
Lorna Fitzjohn

“The performance of further education (FE) colleges is poor. The West Midlands has the largest proportion of inadequate colleges in the country – only 51 per cent of colleges were judged as good or outstanding against a national proportion of 72 per cent. This is the lowest proportion in the country. Only one in 10 colleges in the West Midlands was judged outstanding compared with one in five nationally.”

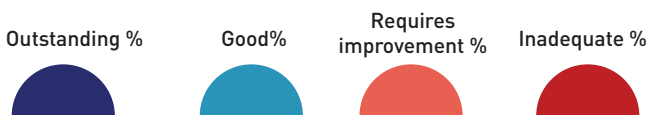


South West
Bradley Simmons

“The large majority of FE and skills providers are good or outstanding. All sixth form colleges, two of the three specialist agricultural colleges, 10 of the 12 independent specialist colleges and 17 of the 21 general further education (GFE) colleges are good or outstanding. However, City of Bristol College, one of the largest GFE colleges, is inadequate.”



KEY Proportion of learners at providers per Ofsted grading as at August 31, 2013

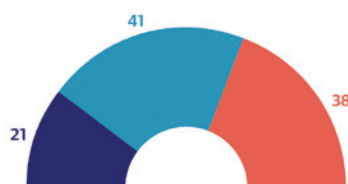


Includes general further education (GFE)/tertiary colleges, higher education institutions, independent specialist colleges, sixth form colleges and specialist FE colleges. Source: Ofsted, December 2013



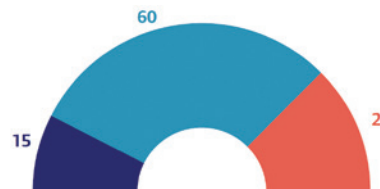
South East
Matthew Coffey

“The proportion of good or better colleges in the South East has increased, from 62 per cent good or outstanding at the start of the year to 71 per cent at the end of August. This is just one percentage point behind the national level of 72 per cent. Things are getting better, but there is morework to do to ensure that improvements are sustained.”



East of England
Sean Harford

“The performance of colleges in the East of England has improved overall this year. General further education colleges improved at a faster rate than was seen nationally but the overall quality is still a little below that for England as a whole. Sixth form colleges in the region remain comparatively strong.”



London
Debbie Jones

“Too many London colleges remain sub-standard. In terms of inspection outcomes, GFE colleges continue to lag well behind the national picture and way behind their counterparts in sixth form and specialist colleges in the capital. However, in the last academic year, the proportion of good or outstanding colleges of all types has improved faster than for England as a whole, so there is some cause for optimism if this momentum is maintained.”



Editor's comment

Parity of funding ditched

The rate cut to full-time 18-year-old students is targeted at the older young learner and applies to both school sixth forms and the FE sector.

But, as any curriculum planner will tell you — and I was one for nearly 10 years — it will in reality impact on the resources for all 16 to 18-year-olds and in the main those at large vocational FE colleges.

Why?

Because providers won't run separate or different courses for 18-year-olds, and a rate cut, all other things being equal, means doing the same with less funding.

And budgets for FE colleges, as opposed to school sixth forms, will feel the hit as they typically take the second chance learners as well as run three-year vocational courses, such as in construction, that start when the learner is aged 16.

Either the government knows the rate cut will in reality also impact on the 16 and 17-year-olds and mainly at FE colleges, and are not saying it, or it has not done its homework.

And Labour's official response has been to 'monitor the situation', which, putting it politely, is apathetic at best.

The new Shadow Education Secretary, Tristram Hunt, should be straight onto his opposite number in power, Michael Gove, demanding to see the impact assessment.

This would prove this rate cut ends any hope of parity of funding between school sixth forms and FE colleges.

A real loss for fairness and as well as our youth.

Nick Linford, editor

Correction

A cynic might suggest that 'pull quotes' (enlarged sections of text often found mid-article) are used simply to fill space.

While there's no doubting they use up quite a bit of room, it would be unfair to say that's all they're there for.

A good pull quote complements the alluring headline and gives the reader a more direct sense of what the article's about.

A bad pull quote leaves the reader questioning what the piece is about. However, worse still would be an entirely irrelevant pull quote.

This happened in last week's edition on page 8, where a pull quote within Mick Fletcher's article actually came from Ian Pryce's piece on the same page. Our mistake, not theirs.

Have you spotted something wrong with this edition of FE Week?

If so, feel free to tell us about it, including the page number and story headline, and explain what the problem is. Email us at news@feweek.co.uk with Corrections in the subject line.



Learners' own jobs could get study programme funding

Paul Offord

@PaulOfford

Learners' part-time paid jobs could be publicly-funded as part of the new study programmes for 16 to 19-year-olds, *FE Week* can reveal.

It had appeared the Department for Education (DfE) would only allow unpaid work experience organised through colleges or independent learning providers to form part of the programmes.

College principals had warned this would have been unfair on students who, for example, attended a course four days a-week and did a part-time job on their day off to help pay their way through education.

Such youngsters would have been forced to give up their paid employment to leave enough time to complete the required amount of unpaid work experience.

But DfE has told *FE Week* of new guidance.

A spokesperson said: "Work experience and supported internships will be funded where the provider has planned, organised and supervised the placement and it forms a part of the student's study programme.

"Work experience or part time work organised by a student independently to their course would not be funded.

"However, teaching time spent helping students ensure that the part-time work they are undertaking directly benefits their study goals could be."

And Marina Gaze, Ofsted's deputy director for FE and skills, told *FE Week*: "We are fully aware that some learners develop good employability skills while on paid employment they have arranged privately.

"Having discussed this with the DfE, we can confirm that this activity can be included as part of the 16 to 19 study programmes, but only if the provider is involved in the learner's development."

Andrew Patience, principal of new College Stamford, was one of those to previously raise the issue. He said: "I am delighted that reason has prevailed and DfE and Ofsted have obviously changed their views. It's a good thing that valuable, paid work can now be taken into account."

George Trow, principal of Doncaster College, agreed the concession was "entirely sensible". He said: "Paid work experience already set up by our students is an important introduction for them to the world of employment. Many students need to work part-time and during their holidays to pay their way through college."

Donald Taylor, chairman of the Learning

and Performance Institute, which represents independent learning providers, said: "Learning at work is not a luxury, it's a necessity. Whether you are fully-employed, work part-time or a student, what you learn is valuable and should be recognised as such."

Vanessa Potter, from West Sussex-based independent learning provider Asphaleia, said: "The move will further reduce barriers to increased participation, thus supporting learners, education providers and employers to embrace statutory requirements.

"Study programmes are now a more viable and attractive option for many learners."

The DfE spokesperson said: "Work experience or part-time work can be of real benefit to students in developing employability skills — particularly if this work is relevant to the course they are undertaking.

"This is something that the DfE and Ofsted would encourage."

The Education Funding Agency also confirmed that, "only work experience with external employers should be counted towards and recorded as a work experience learning aim from 2014/15.

"Simulated work environments should be separately recorded as non-qualification activity."

See Marina Gaze expert piece on page 10

Your comments on our big stories

Employers failing the Ofsted challenge — are they fit to take over skills agenda?

Should businesses who are going to be doing traineeships have an Ofsted inspection before starting delivery. The public is going to lose faith in traineeships and what about the people who doing the traineeships? We seem to be taking one step forward then two steps backwards.

Lindsay Mccurdy

Can see large firms and trailblazers being able to set up high quality programmes but these will be in the minority. The bulk of SMEs will likely be too daunted by the ever-changing rules and regulations to truly engage. Fear numbers could drop like a stone if this is the case and despite being well intentioned this shift could harm the future of millions.

Paul Cox

Have you got something to say about FE or one of our stories?

Email us with Comments in the subject line at news@feweek.co.uk or leave a comment on our website www.feweek.co.uk

Or, you can write to us at *FE Week*, 161-165 Greenwich High Road, London SE10 8JA.

Full contact details should be provided and can be withheld by *FE Week* upon request.

FE Week profile

Christine Bullock ~ her story

Rebecca Cooney

@RebeccaKCooney

The chief executive of apt awards talks to *FE Week*.

The Pheasant Inn, in Chippenham, has a lot to answer for in Christine Bullock's life.

It was where she was once persuaded to take part in a pub crawl around the Wiltshire market town dressed as a 'push-me-pull-you' — a double headed pantomime horse — and where she met late husband Bob.

It was also where she had a conversation that would lead her from account management into education — something she said she'd never do.

"I just didn't see myself as a teacher. I didn't think I had the right skills," she says.

Bullock was out for a meal with her then-boss at RHM Bakeries in 1979 when she met Mike Smith, a lecturer in business and economics at Chippenham College and mentioned that she'd done a degree in business studies.

"And he said: 'We need someone like you at Chippenham College'," explains Bullock, aged 60.

"When I asked my boss what he thought he said: 'Well there are lots of changes coming and I can't guarantee a job for you in a couple of years' time'.

"And RHM Bakeries, which was a very big company, disappeared two years later, so he was quite right."

So Bullock applied for the college role having worked at RHM Bakeries for two and half years after graduating from Leicester University.

"A few years later Mike told me he'd have asked anybody who was anywhere near good because he was so desperate at the time," she says.

Bullock was born in Great Malvern, Worcestershire.

"But saying I come from Malvern is quite misleading," she says.

"My father was Serbian, he was a prisoner of war caught by the Germans in the Second World War, and came over here in 1948 as a displaced person."

Bullock's father, Zivadin Batachanin, was liberated by American forces, who, unwilling to send him back to newly-communist Serbia, gave him a choice between going to England or Venezuela.

"As he got older he spoke a bit more about the war, but not very often," she says.

"He was lucky — he was on a farm Stalag so it meant it wasn't as bad as some.

"In a soft moment he would tell us he would become friends with the German guards, but at times it was quite difficult — I think the food was limited sometimes.

"He did tell us the first night he was captured... they were sat in a field, and if they fell over they were shot, so they held each other up. It's difficult to imagine it."

Bullock's mother, Freda, left home in Nottinghamshire at 16 and joined the Land Army, where she met Zivadin.

"I think that's why I've always been so resilient," says Bullock.

"I've not been through what he's been through. And my mother is adopted, and I've not been through what she's been through.

"They both did two jobs to make sure we had a nice home."

Zivadin had just four years of education and taught himself to read and write in English. Bullock says this could be why FE appeals to her.

"Even though my mother had an English education and always worked hard, my father couldn't help with my homework so I had to do it myself, so I have great empathy with people who come from backgrounds where they have got no help at home," she says.

After making the leap into FE, Bullock stayed at Chippenham College of Technology for 19 years, apart from a brief stint at Salisbury College.

She describes herself as "ambitious" and was promoted quickly, changing jobs every few years.

"I got to head of department level quite quickly, met Bob and he already had two children so moving from Chippenham was out of the question and the only way to get further in education was to move around, so I stayed in middle management level," she says.

"I never felt restricted because staying at the college — at the time felt like the right thing to do and I was happy there."

Eventually, an opportunity came up at Edexcel, which Bullock says was "fantastic".

"I never felt restricted because staying at the college — at the time felt like the right thing to do and I was happy there"

She spent the next 15 years zig-zagging between colleges and awarding bodies, taking on vice-principal roles.

It's a personal thing

What's your favourite book?
Great Gatsby by F Scott Fitzgerald

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I kept changing my mind. First of all it was a solicitor and then it was a market researcher. The last thing I wanted to do was go into education

If you could have anyone to a dinner party, living or dead, who would it be?
Nelson Mandela. I'd have said that before he died as well. I'd probably invite some great sportsmen — David Beckham, Glenn



Inset: Christine Bullock with a fellow charity fundraiser and needlework and fashion lecturer Heather Akers (right), wearing a Push-Me-Pull-You costume in the Pheasant Inn in the early 1980s

However, in 2005, while Bullock was vice principal at City of Bristol College, Bob was diagnosed with lung cancer. He died two years later, six months before his 60th birthday.

"Bob was bedridden for a while," says Bullock.

"He went a lot sooner than we expected and my principal encouraged me to come back to work as soon as possible which was really good for me, it's different for everyone but it was good for me and I'll always appreciate it."

She adds: "His parents had died at 59 and 58 and he always wanted to make it to 60.

"And Bob had a twin brother, and I wanted him and their parents to be able to celebrate what would have been Bob's birthday."

Hoddle, tennis player Ilie Năstase, cricket player Basil D'Oliveira — and then William Shakespeare, Robbie Williams and Paul Newman, because he was lovely. And of course, my partner and family

What's your pet hate?
Discrimination, bullying and arrogance

What do you do to switch off from work?

We laugh a lot at work — that's quite important. At home, watching sport, walking, holidays, going to pubs and listening to music

Bullock left City of Bristol College the following August to take up the post of principal at South Leicestershire College.

"Bob had always wanted me to be a principal and I thought I'd carry on to what I was going to do anyway and I think it was good to move on from Bristol then, as a change of scenery," she says.

Now chief executive of apt awards, Bullock is still ambitious.

"When I first started at Chippenham, a lot of the secretarial lecturers were in their 40s and complaining about getting old, and I thought: 'I'll never be like that'," she says.

"I was 60 two weeks ago, and I am pleased to say that I'm not like they were.

"I have embraced change and I'm trying to hold on, because how you choose to act your age depends on you as a person.

"So yes, I am ambitious. I'm ambitious for wherever I work, I want them to do well — I do things to help learners achieve and to help learners progress."

This desire to help people learn, she says, is "innate".

"My father had it, my late husband was like that — looking after people — and my new partner, Rob, is like that too," she explains.

"You can be ambitious for money and although we all know money's nice, there are ambitions for your principles and your beliefs as well, and that's quite important."

Progress update for the ETF at the end of 2013

Rebecca Cooney
@RebeccaKCooney

The Education and Training Foundation will be celebrating its first Christmas in the coming weeks. Rebecca Cooney looks back at an event five months since its “official launch” — and even further back to the early discussions about a new sector organisation.

The concept of the Education and Training Foundation, the sector self-improvement body, was first given life in August 2012. The group has been through consultations, a name change, a shock resignation and is now up and running, so *FE Week* took a look back over the foundation’s eventful first 18 months.

In October 2012, Skills Minister Matthew Hancock announced the Association of Colleges (AoC) and Association for Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), along with HOLEX, would be steering the proposed group, then known as the FE Guild.

The guild, said Mr Hancock, would “support and enhance the professional standing of those who teach in further education”.

The group was renamed the Education and Training Foundation after a consultation deemed the name guild “old-fashioned”.

In April, an implementation plan was released detailing £18.8m funding to be provided by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) for the first two years of the foundation, which would then move towards being self-funded.

It also revealed the foundation would operate by commissioning other bodies to carry out its research and development work.

Many questioned the need for a new sector body, suggesting the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, which was no longer funded after the foundation began, could have been modified to suit the same purpose.

But AELP chief executive Stewart Segal told delegates at the AELP conference in June “the Education and Training Foundation has not replaced LSIS — it is a new and different organisation”.

Peter Davies, then leading the guild steering group, said: “The fundamental premise is that we are about having a professional, relevant, highly, dually skilled and motivated work force.”

The Education and Training Foundation was officially launched on August 1.

But just two weeks in, the foundation attracted criticism for failing to properly advertise senior roles and just a fortnight after that, the interim chief executive Sir Geoff Hall resigned.

September saw the appointments of the permanent chief executive, David Russell (pictured centre left), who is yet to take up post, and permanent chair Peter Mullins (pictured centre right), as well as a commitment from BIS to provide an extra £10m funding in 2015-16.



From left: Lynsi Hayward-Smith, head of adult learning and skills Cambridgeshire County Council, Don Hayes MBE, chief executive of ENABLE, Asha Khemka OBE, principal and chief executive of West Nottinghamshire College Group, David Hughes, chief executive of Niace and former interim chair of foundation board, Stewart Segal, chief executive of AELP, Peter McCann, principal and chief executive of Kirklees College, Martin Doel, chief executive of AoC, John Hyde, executive chair of HIT Training Ltd, Christine Jeffry, strategy and policy adviser for General Physics (UK) Ltd, Skills Training Academy, and Mark White, head of the vice-chancellor’s office at Teesside University. Picture by Nick Linford

The government has tasked the foundation with research and development around fulfilling the recommendations of Frank McLoughlin’s Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) which published its report *It’s About Work* in March.

The foundation’s panel at the conference on the report, held at the Skills Show in November, raised as many questions around how CAVTL’s aims could be achieved as it answered.

Confederation of British Industry director for employment and skills Neil Carberry said: “The challenge is to build confidence in young people, their parents and the education system that vocational education choices have validity.”

Mr Davies reminded delegates that the foundation’s core aim is to be responsive to the sector’s needs.

“We want to hear what you think... Make sure you tell us what we need to do to support you,” he said.

And questions were a big theme for new chair Mr Mullins at the AoC conference the following week.

“We’re up, we’re now running, we’re underway,” he said.

“But the big question eve-

ryone wants to get a much clearer view on from us is, what does that really look like in practice?”

“We’ve got a big programme of tenders out, of work underway, but more importantly we’re starting to engage with the sector much more about what they think comes next for us.”

He re-affirmed the importance of the foundation being sector-led.

“Over the next 12 months that’s what we’ve got to get everybody in the sector convinced that we are really doing, that we are helping them synthesise their views and articulate them in a useful way for a wider audience,” said Mr Mullins.

After a shaky start, with tenders submitted in a non-competitive process binned in October for the introduction of a competitive

system, the foundation now has a range of invitations to tender out. They include a set of consultations on English, maths and STEM, graduate recruitment, leadership and governance and vocational education and training.

There is also a tender to be the foundation’s delivery partner for Teach Too, a key part of the CAVTL report which said all lecturers should also be practising professionals in their field.

At the AoC conference, Mr Mullins summed up the foundation’s own hopes for its future.

“Absolutely key for us is ‘is it going to result in a specific, measurable difference?’” he said.

“That’s what we’re aiming to achieve and I’m pretty confident we’re going to be successful.”



Claire Gill, interim communications director at the Education and Training Foundation tries out an *FE Week* bag at the AoC conference. Picture by Andy Whitehead



Panel debate at the AoC annual conference in November. Pictured, from left: Paul Mullins, Education and Training Foundation chair, David Hughes, Niace chief executive and ex foundation interim chair, Peter Davies, interim foundation chief executive, and conference presenter Emily Maitlis. Picture by Andy Whitehead

FE Week experts

Getting ahead vocationally with Teach Too



How do you take industry expertise into the learning environment while retaining that practical, everyday sector knowledge? It's an issue that has been looked at recently and Jenny Williams wants to hear from FE and skills providers where such issues have been overcome.

There has been much discussion in the last few weeks about 'line of sight to work' and 'the two-way street' — two of the key characteristics for excellent vocational teaching and learning identified earlier this year by the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) in its report, *It's about work*.

The first National Vocational Education and Training Conference, also called *It's about work*, which was held as part of the Skills Show in November, heard from Sir Charlie Mayfield, chairman of the John Lewis Partnership and the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, just how important vocational education and training (VET) will be "if we are to secure a structural economic recovery, rather than a cyclical rebound".

The language is resonating, and in so doing, creating a platform on which to raise the status, and further improve the quality and impact of VET.

Meanwhile, the Education and Training Foundation has been making a start on taking forward CAVTL's recommendations. An early priority is Teach Too.

The idea of Teach Too is to encourage experts from industry to spend some time teaching their occupational expertise to others and to contribute to vocational curriculum development, while continuing to work.

In the other direction of the two-way street, it is also about enabling teachers and trainers to draw on up-to-date industry experience and in so doing to add value to employers' businesses.

We know we are not starting from scratch, and that a number of Teach Too style arrangements already exist.

Our starting point, therefore, has been to call for the engagement of the education and training sector to identify and report on a good range of existing effective practices as a basis for further development work.

We want to translate knowledge of existing effective practices and development work into shareable expertise in transferring on-the-job

learning to an off-the-job learning context and vice versa.

We have also launched an invitation to tender for a delivery partner to work with us on this and, working from practice to principles to help us design a national framework for Teach Too next year.

Teach Too is an early priority for the foundation's vocational education and training strategy, together with programmes to support the introduction of traineeships, the implementation of reforms to apprenticeships, and professional development support to embed skills competitions practice.

Further programmes taking forward CAVTL's recommendations on the two-way street, improving the distinctive practices of vocational teaching and learning, support for occupational updating and the use of learning technologies will follow early in 2014.

We will also be consulting on the longer term development of a national VET Centre which could act as a focal point for excellence and innovation in vocational teaching and learning.

“We want to translate knowledge of existing effective practices and development work into shareable expertise”

As the author of the CAVTL report, it has been pleasing to hear its language being adopted. Our priority now at the foundation is to build on the interest in the CAVTL's findings as a platform for action and innovation to support the further professional development of the vocational education and training workforce. As Frank McLoughlin has said, CAVTL saw “genuinely world-class provision in a whole range of settings”.

What was clear was that “the best vocational teaching and learning is a sophisticated process; it demands ‘dual professionals’ — teachers and trainers with occupational expertise and experience, who can combine this with excellent teaching and learning practice”.

The foundation's task is to build on the expertise that already exists, to make it more visible and replicate it more widely for the benefit of learners and employers.

Jenny Williams, director of vocational education and training, Education and Training Foundation

Visit www.et-foundation.co.uk/our-priorities/vocational-education.html to find opportunities to work with the foundation on Teach Too. Short expressions of interest are invited by January 17. To bid for the opportunity to be the foundation's delivery partner for Teach Too, visit the procurement page of the foundation website.

Refreshing the Education and Training Foundation's online learning services



Helen Pettifor explains how the Education and Training Foundation hopes to serve the FE and skills sector with an online presence it hopes to develop further.

Like many other personal and professional activities, as the internet becomes more and more a part of our daily lives, the demand for online training and development as part of a blended approach to learning continues to grow.

People like e-learning because it gives them instant access to a wide range of current information, enabling them to supplement and build upon their face to face learning, personalise their approach to continuous professional development (CPD), and research specific areas of interest at their own pace.

This is particularly important to an organisation like the Education and Training Foundation which exists to enhance professionalism and drive up professional standards.

Professional learning lies at the heart of everything that the foundation sets out to deliver and achieve, and it naturally follows that the foundation should offer a range of online resources and web services that maintain teaching and learning excellence, enhance leadership and that contribute to the continuing professional development of people working in the sector.

Some of these services, such as the Excellence Gateway, Learning Environment and FE Advice service transferred to the foundation from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service and this transfer of services provides an opportunity for a review to make sure that what we offer continues to best meet sector needs and is as easily accessible to as wide a cross section of users and practitioners as possible.

We already know that each online service has a loyal community of users, and like the sector itself, the content on each different site is diverse with many specialist areas, collections and web domains, which are used differently by different people. But feedback has also shown that the range of resources avail-

able is not clearly understood by everyone, and that key useful content such as the English and Maths hub, up to date information about teaching qualifications, Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning case studies, management toolkits and free courses are not promoted as well as they could be.

Of course, to develop and promote the services in a way that meets sector needs, it is important that we continue to hear and understand the range of diverse and representative views.

We need to know what works, what does not work and what could be improved as well as what people think we absolutely must keep and continue to develop, and what is becoming less useful as our learning styles and opportunities evolve.

With this in mind, a sector-nominated project board and advisory group has been set up to develop options for consultation, and we have put a range of initiatives in place to ensure that we consult widely across the sector and gain views at every level.

“We need to know what works, what does not work and what could be improved as well as what people think we absolutely must keep and continue to develop”

We will ask users what improvements they would like to see, and our aim is to create a new service of demonstrable value to the sector and which enhances its reputation.

Lots of changes will be made as we move through the review process over the coming months, and we have committed to building on what works and what is valued by existing and potential service users.

Your voice matters and sharing your views need not be time-consuming — there are a variety of opportunities to get involved, either directly through short onsite surveys or indirectly through more detailed focus groups which will be led by the sector membership bodies. If you use any of the sites regularly, please do take the time to tell us what you think.

We hope that people will see quick wins as well as long term improvements following the review process, which will continue until March, when the transition to new services will begin.

Service will be maintained as normal while the review, consultation and transition to new services takes place. Please keep an eye on the foundation website for further information.

Helen Pettifor, interim lead for the digital estate, Education and Training Foundation

FE Week experts

The inadequate situation of one rule for colleges, another for indies

Colleges rated inadequate by Ofsted are given a chance to improve before their funding is withdrawn and it is unfair that independent training providers are not given the same opportunity, says Paul Warner.

The Skills Funding Agency's (SFA) Approach to Intervention recently set out the process by which contracts held by providers rated inadequate by Ofsted will be handled.

In the case of FE colleges, the SFA will issue a notice of concern specifying remedies to be made to allow the contract to be retained. The FE commissioner will consider how such an improvement plan should be undertaken.

Only after a further review would the SFA even consider issuing a notice of withdrawal of funding.

But when it comes to independent training providers (ITPs), the assumption is that the contracts will be terminated in all but the most exceptional circumstances.

The Education Funding Agency (EFA) has much the same policy and this is clearly iniquitous.

This "all or nothing" criteria for ITPs raises the quality stakes to a frighteningly high level, given that the imposition of an inadequate rating means summary contract termination.

The Association of Education and Learning Providers' (AELP) position is that in any review of poor quality provision, the reasons for the poor inspection and the future of the learners and employers must be taken into



account.

A satisfactory rating may have been missed by a narrow margin and the issues of concern could be resolved.

Consideration should also be given to the possible adverse impact of summary closure on the availability of provision in a given geographical or occupational area.

One reason given to AELP for this unequal treatment is that the legal relationship between the state and FE colleges allows for the leadership and governance of a college to be replaced if necessary, but replacing the owner of an ITP would not be practical.

This ignores the point that it may not be

the leadership and governance that needs addressing. It could be the executive management team, the replacement or modification of which is equally possible in a college or an ITP.

“A satisfactory rating may have been missed by a narrow margin and the issues of concern could be resolved”

The effect of summary closures can also be seen down supply chains, where a sub-contractor may well be forced to close despite the fact it is delivering quality provision.

While the SFA is reasonably aware of its supply chain coverage, the EFA does not have the details of its subcontracting arrangements.

In any case, neither gives it consideration when issuing summary contract terminations.

The AELP is aware of several examples of where good quality provision in a local authority area is adversely affected. In fact vital provision in their area has been closed down on this basis without reference to their views and an indication of the timescale when any

replacement may be made available.

We should also remember that there are other reasons when this intervention is implemented such as audit issues.

Again the SFA and EFA should ensure they understand the full implications of implementing an immediate response which results in closure of provision.

We have seen an example recently where it has been accepted that the provider did not make any false claims. Unfortunately, the provision was closed long before the facts were established.

It has been a core policy of AELP since its formation to support the drive for high quality provision and our policy remains as strong as ever, but we need a balanced approach to the position where an established provider receives an inadequate rating.

This response must reflect the opportunity to turn that provision around as it does for FE colleges.

In some cases, a period of review and remedy would be a better response than immediate closure, so the solution provides the best result for learners and employers.

Intervention policies at both the SFA and EFA should reflect this and give all institutions rated inadequate an equal chance to submit realistic improvement plans, before contract termination is considered.

Paul Warner, director of employment and skill, Association of Employment and Learning Providers

Casting the Ofsted eye over 16 to 19 work experience



Turning up on time and being presentable are just two of the life lessons a good spell of work experience can reinforce (or indeed, enforce). Marina Gaze explains how they fit into the new 16 to 19 study programmes.

A couple of weeks back, I enjoyed a stimulating debate with college leaders on issues relating to work experience at the Association of Colleges conference.

Work experience is not compulsory for all

learners, but it should be an important part of vocational programmes and we would consider it good practice if all on the academic route have opportunities to develop employability skills in the workplace.

This is why we believe it is important to offer some form of tailored work experience to all learners outside of college.

We understand that many learners have busy lives, some juggle employment as well as study.

However, learners joining the 16 to 19 study programmes, introduced from August this year, are expected to follow a learning programme that is tailored to their individual needs, education and employment goals.

These new arrangements allow for more time to be spent on work experience or non-qualification activities.

Tailored work experience, like this, will mean that learners are able to find work in the future that directly links to their study.

We have not developed specific guidance for the inspection of 16 to 19 study programmes as the Common Inspection Framework for FE and skills adequately covers all aspects of the programme.

However, inspectors do look at outcomes for learners in relation to the extent to which learners develop personal, social and employability skills.

Examples of these would be personal awareness, such as appearance, attitudes, behaviour and punctuality, problem solving skills, and the ability to work in teams.

We also explore the extent to which learners

develop awareness of customer and business needs, as well as the ability to communicate effectively, apply numeracy skills and use computers — all in the context of work.

“Learners are expected to make a real contribution in the workplace and develop their skills”

Ofsted is very clear that where work experience is a planned aspect of a student's 16 to 19 study programme, at least some of the placement should be external to the provider.

We are fully aware that provider-based working environments, and provider-based employers, such as college companies, can provide a good step-up for learners who need more intensive support and training to build their confidence and skills.

However, these opportunities should not be seen as a complete substitute for an external placement where the students work in an unfamiliar environment and where they are more likely to have to react to situations and circumstances that are new to them.

Learners should progress to external work experience placements at the earliest possibility, especially if work experience is a substantial part of their programme.

We are also fully aware that some learn-

ers develop good employability skills while on paid employment they have arranged privately.

Having discussed this with the Department for Education (DfE), we can confirm that this activity can be included as part of the 16 to 19 study programmes, but only if the provider is involved in the learner's development.

For this to happen, the provider should, firstly, assess the workplace to check that the learner is working in a safe environment and, secondly, agree with the employer and learner realistic and relevant learning objectives linked to developing the learners' employability skills.

The provider should also arrange for the learner's progress to be assessed and for constructive feedback to be given.

Inspectors also explore the extent to which work experience provides purposeful work that offers challenge, and is relevant to the each learner's study programme.

Learners are expected to make a real contribution in the workplace and develop their skills.

They should also have opportunities to apply practical work-related skills in English and maths in the context of work experience.

Above all, we expect leaders and managers to ensure that work experience is well-supervised and that learners obtain a genuine learning experience suited to their needs and, where applicable, their future career plans.

Marina Gaze, Her Majesty's Inspector, deputy director for FE and skills, Ofsted

Get this bit right and you'll really start to change lives

Getting into schools, where information, advice and guidance is known to be a problem, can be difficult for colleges. Catherine Hill explains how it can be done.

Ofsted recently judged us as outstanding but while this is understandably a source of great local pride, the inspectors' comments about the strength of our partnerships with schools, and the impact these have on the progress of our students, may be of most interest to education policy makers.

We believe they provide a win-win model of best practice for collaboration between schools and colleges to the significant advantage of young people.

The considerable effort we put into helping schools meet their statutory information, advice and guidance (IAG) duties has a very positive impact on the ratio of students moving into jobs or further study after they leave us.

Those partnerships take various forms.

Throughout the year, we run 'super learning days' with local high schools, designed around thematic learning experiences. They have included CSI Week — covering subjects as diverse as chromatography in forensics, statistics in advertising and the velocity of blood splatter — and Balloon Car Challenge, in which students work as a Formula 1 race team to create a car using a box of supplies.

Although the focus is on science, technology, engineering and maths subjects, the day incorporates other careers, including HR, marketing and finance.



By allowing students to live and act out these careers as opposed to simply outlining their options, we are able to offer engaging and useful IAG which is likely to inspire them.

The super learning strategy started three years ago and grew out of experience and chat among our partner schools. Our senior team had become increasingly involved in helping local schools as governors or in support across a range of issues including staff development, marketing and curriculum development. We began to see more clearly how we could help in terms of careers guidance.

In addition, we run an English festival for school pupils, promoting the number of careers around English (where speakers have included stand-up comedians, journalists, songwriters and poets) and a written English campaign, in which Year 7 to 10 pupils are

challenged to write a 1,000-word story after completing a critical thinking workshop delivered by college staff and supported by English undergraduates.

Other events include a maths 'pyramid' day for primary and secondary schools — where Year 5 pupils are grouped with Year 8 mentors in the college's university centre, to take part in maths workshops delivered by tutors, assisted by college student ambassadors.

“Although the focus is on science, technology, engineering and maths subjects, the day incorporates other careers, including HR, marketing and finance”

Partnerships are not limited to the secondary sector, not least because there are clear advantages for FE providers in helping develop literacy and numeracy among younger cohorts.

After research from the Literacy Trust found that 1-in-3 children didn't own a book and 7 per cent had never been to a library, we launched our Illuminators storytelling sessions with Year 3 children. Students from the college's School of Society, Health and Childhood read to the children to inspire and engage them through stories and literature. So far 620 children have taken part.

Our strategy has been one of reacting to the issues of the day faced by schools. In the case of IAG, high school staff were struggling to know how to meet the demand and how to deliver effectively — many high school teachers are subject teachers and may not have experience of their subject as a career.

We recognised that our teaching workforce were essentially career professionals first and lecturers second, so we could talk confidently and give career experiences in whatever young people wanted. We've done those jobs.

We team teach with our partner high school staff and this is where things really take off and become a community of developing practice. As a result, high school teachers can build up their resources and knowledge to contextualise their subjects.

We are all aware of the potential for collaboration and the value of partnerships in getting the right students onto the right courses. Get this bit right and we'll really start to change lives.

Catherine Hill, deputy principal, Blackpool and The Fylde College

MATHS EVERYWHERE

'Maths Everywhere' was the winning app - voted for by the public - designed and developed by Bolton College and Modern English, in partnership with NIACE. Maths Everywhere, which will be free to download, has three different sections - the first gives users a range of helpful tools to solve everyday maths problems, another teaches them how to work out the solutions and the last one enables them to practice what they've learned so they can improve their skills and become more confident.

Maths Everywhere is funded by BIS.



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FE Week experts

Employers can't do without specialist support from providers



Many employers will struggle to identify and purchase the best possible training packages for their apprentices and providers are best-placed to advise them, says Michael Woodgate.

The chancellor's announcement that apprenticeship funding will be routed directly to employers is the latest in a long line of policies, proposals and initiatives based on the prevailing consensus that employers must "own the skills agenda".

Whether it's Labour's latest policy proposals or the coalition's response to the Richards report, "what employers want" is taken as the mandatory starting point for policy making.

Writing in *FE Week* recently, Michael Davis, chief executive of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), claimed that the "only plausible reason" for reported hard-to-fill vacancies in the hairdressing sector was the disconnect between the training provided and the needs of employers.

In my experience, there is rarely only one plausible reason for anything and this is almost never the case in the complex area of learning and development.

This simplistic world-view assumes employer demand is articulated perfectly — all that is required is for training providers, learners and the government to respond.

But look at what it is that employers actually want and the situation is not so straightforward.

Employers want their organisations to thrive and to prosper.

This will require, among other things, people doing their jobs well.

The question is how best to ensure this happens.

An intelligent approach would see training and development as a part of good management rather than a substitute for it.

So the effectiveness of training procurement and the articulation of "employer demand" will depend on the workplace culture from which they originate.

There are some excellent employers who know how to get the best out of their people and buy training that adds value. They rarely suffer skills gaps or shortages.

At the same time, there are some pretty dreadful employers who blame everyone else for their shortcomings.

The vast majority are somewhere in the middle, wanting to do well but not always managing it.

I believe it would be a lot more constructive to acknowledge that this group needs support to improve their management of people, rather than simply pretend they are the fount of all knowledge.

What is the good of buying a "skills solution" without a clear idea of why it's being bought, what represents value for money and how its success will be measured?

And how effective will this skills solution be without robust management to sustain whatever improvements have been derived from it?

It is an unwillingness to ask and answer these questions that leads to money being squandered on ineffective training.

"An intelligent approach would see training and development as a part of good management rather than a substitute for it"

When the money involved does not even belong to the employer but is the taxpayer's, the risks of getting poor value are even greater. Who is best placed to provide this support?

Business Link has gone virtual and disappeared off the radar. Trade associations are very good at meeting immediate needs around compliance and legislation, but not so good at more thorny issues.

Most sector skills councils are too busy justifying their own existence to be of much use.

The most obvious answer is the learning provider, but through a different sort of relationship with their employer customers.

Too often, both parties are trapped in a retail, solution-based mind-set, when more in-depth analysis would expose the real issues behind the skills need.

The great risk of such an approach is that the actual "solution" does not lie with the products the provider is offering, hence the reason these conversations rarely take place.

A move to genuine partnership working between providers and employers, where employers see themselves as part of the skills system rather than just articulate customers, is essential if progress is to be made.

Michael Woodgate, Independent Skills Consultant

Eleven months after an Ofsted blow



It's the nightmare situation that keeps principals up at night and after an Ofsted visit in February, it happened to Lynn Merilion as Ofsted said City of Bristol College was inadequate. She explains what's been happening at the college since then.

When we received our disappointing Ofsted grade back in February we knew we had a lot of work ahead of us.

I had joined the college a couple of months before Ofsted visited, and had spent time talking with a wide variety of stakeholders.

Everybody I spoke to mentioned student achievement and the student experience as areas for improvement. The Ofsted report confirmed this.

We are now ten months on from the original Ofsted inspection; so what have we been doing to improve the college? Most importantly, we knew we had to place students back at the heart of everything we do — and that's what we've done.

We established a new mission — Creating Lifetime Opportunities through Outstanding Education and Training — and student-facing values which are embedded into everything we now do.

Students come to college to gain a qualification and part of refocusing on our students means that we need to improve student achievement. Because of this, some of our biggest changes have been in the areas of teaching, learning and assessment.

For our teachers to become outstanding they need to see what outstanding looks like and we decided to use our best teachers to do this.

We created videos and other e-learning tools showing excellent teaching and made these available to all staff; implemented a programme of staff development days with learning from external consultants but also from high performing internal staff; and made

some of our best teachers Teaching, Learning and Assessment Coaches (TLACs). They work across the college with individual teachers and groups to provide specific training focusing on the seven non-negotiable elements that must be present in all lessons, as identified by the college's senior leadership team.

We've improved the student experience outside the classroom too, with a comprehensive induction programme for new students at the start of the academic year.

There is a full student calendar of events, including sporting activities provided by our sport maker, embedding equality and diversity and functional skills. Youth workers have been appointed to work with students on a range of issues and, as apprentices, they are in the unique position of being both college staff and students.

So, how do we know what we're doing is working? Well, our Ofsted monitoring visit in September showed we were making reasonable progress.

The inspectors recognised that we have a robust post-inspection action plan in place with a clear strategy for improving teaching, learning and assessment.

"Our Ofsted monitoring visit in September showed we were making reasonable progress"

The monitoring visit report described our management team as having a "clear focus on bringing about change and improving the quality of provision across the college."

In addition, the report praised our "strong and sustained focus on improving the quality and consistency of teaching, learning and assessment" which was "beginning to have a positive impact".

Feedback from students and staff also shows us how far we have come since February. The recent two-day monitoring visit took place at one of our campuses and I was delighted to receive an email from a member of staff at a different campus asking if Ofsted could visit them too. There is a really positive feeling about the college with staff keen to show Ofsted just how far we've come.

Of course, we still have a way to go on our journey to outstanding, and we never lose sight of that, but it's also important for us to celebrate the achievements we have made to date and to remember that there are areas of the college which we did very well in the original inspection.

We don't know when our full re-inspection will take place; it could be any time next year. What we do know is that our improvements to date are having a real impact; that our monitoring visit report was positive because of this; and that we are ready to show Ofsted what we can do.

Lynn Merilion, principal, City of Bristol College

All I want for Christmas is... a target (for English and maths)



Any preconceived idea that adult literacy and numeracy in the UK was a source of pride will have been seriously questioned over the past year. Harvey Young examines how a nation might improve its English and maths.

This has been a year of turmoil for education. You might argue that the upheaval has been no more marked than in

previous years.

But there's no doubt that the results of previous years' policies — or lack of them — have come back to haunt us in the last 12 months, whether it's the Richard Review, Perkins or the PISA international rankings.

For me, one of the most disappointing figures to come out of the plethora of research and reports that rained down on the sector was revealed in last month's FE & Skills: Learner Participation, Outcomes and Level of Highest Qualification Held, published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Skills Funding Agency.

The report tells us that there is a disturbing 3 per cent drop in the number of adults studying English and maths, even though these courses are fully government-funded.

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, said: "This should set alarm bells ringing, given England's relatively poor literacy and numeracy levels in comparison with our economic competitors."

So why is there a drop in the numbers? Well, I fear it's largely down to lack of political will. There are no targets for colleges or training providers in England to raise literacy and numeracy levels among adults.

We may deny it, but when the government sets targets, our sector — like so many others — jumps. The prime example of this is in apprenticeships. Look at how they have blossomed and grown. Few would dispute that this is in no small part because colleges

and training providers have government-set targets to achieve.

I don't know why the government has not decided to encourage the FE sector to grasp

"There are no targets for colleges or training providers in England to raise literacy and numeracy levels among adults"

this particular nettle. Or has the issue simply been overlooked? Perhaps, but it's a big thing to overlook.

I've heard schools blamed for the national 'embarrassment' over basic skills. "If schools did their jobs properly, we wouldn't have to play catch-up with the adults," say some in FE.

But this is a national issue that should not be laid at schools' doors. It is a crisis that calls for a cross-sector response.

Mr Hughes rightly points out the economic risks in having an illiterate and innumerate workforce, but what about the equally serious social repercussions of a skills deficit among

our young people?

Poor educational attainment is cyclical. Many adults are not fully functioning members of society simply because of their low levels of literacy and numeracy. They're locked out of employment, and those in work miss out on promotion. They're forced to live on the breadline or below it. And, crucially, if school was a 'waste of time' for them, it's highly unlikely that they're going to support their children's learning, a key factor in educational attainment.

Hope was high on the agenda last year. The London Olympics was badged as 'inspiration for a generation', but adults who are given a second chance at English and maths can inspire generations to come — their children, and their children's children.

If colleges and training providers aren't given targets for adults learning in English and maths, it seems inevitable that participation levels will continue to drop. As funding gets harder to come by (and it will, if demand is seen to diminish) the outlook will be bleak for thousands.

So, when you're writing your greeting cards, calculating how long the turkey needs in the oven, or deciding whether or to laugh or groan as you read out the Christmas cracker jokes, spare a thought for the thousands of adults who will struggle with any of these seasonal rituals.

They deserve better.

Harvey Young, director, NCCSkills

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FE Week campus round-up

sponsored by **empra**



Toby Hewson and Lucy Shuker with students

Students inspired by disabled ‘role models’

Learners were inspired by two high-achieving people with disabilities who visited Barking and Dagenham College. The special guests were wheelchair tennis player Lucy Shuker, who won a bronze medal in the 2012 Paralympics, and Toby Hewson, founder and chief executive of the charity JustDifferent. They joined students as part of the college’s celebrations of International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Toby, who has cerebral palsy, used a communication aid called a pathfinder to tell students that anyone can be a role model. Lucy explained how being left paralysed from the waist down after a motorbike accident in 2001 opened new doors to her in top-level sport. Lucy said: “You never know what’s going to happen in life, and it doesn’t matter what happens, you’ve just got to give it 100 per cent and enjoy it.”

Packing a punch in boxing competition

Talented East Durham College students proved they can pack a punch by making it to the finals of a national boxing competition. Adam Cope and Jordan Ellison, both aged 17, have fought their way to the finals of the National Clubs for Young People’s Championship, with Jordan in Class C (57kg to 60kg) and Adam in Class B (54kg to 57kg). The duo

are studying with the college’s Strike It Right boxing academy, which helps 16 to 18-year-old advanced-level boxers improve their skills while completing academic qualifications. Coach Dave Binns said: “Adam and Jordan have done really well to get this far in the competition and although they are both coming up against tough fights they have the skill and ability to go on and win.”



Young boxers Jordan Ellison and Adam Cope



Staff and students who took part in the Santa Run

Fun runners support autism charity

Staff and students raised hundreds of pounds for charity through the first ever TyneMet College Santa Fun Run. More than 150 people who walked or ran the mile-long route wore Santa suits, festive-themed hats, antlers and elves ears. They raised £287 for the college’s nominated charity of the year, the North East Autism Society.

Sarah Bennett, who organised the fun run, said: “I was delighted so many staff and students took part. Although it was cold, we had blue skies and lots of sunshine, which is perfect running or walking weather. “Everyone who took part said that they had a great time and I am really pleased with the amount of money raised for the North East Autism Society.”

Second indie gets top marks from Ofsted

A second independent learning provider (ILP) has won outstanding praise from Ofsted in just over a month. In its first inspection, Slough-based QA Apprenticeships won the sector’s second grade one under the current inspection regime. Hawk Training won the first last month. Ben Pike, QA director, said: “We hope this

outstanding commendation encourages more employers and young people to consider apprenticeships as a credible and exciting route to develop talent.” The 710-learner IT and business provider was rated outstanding by the education watchdog across all the headline areas and the report praised teaching there as “inspirational”. The report said: “QA treats apprentices on a par with its professional fee-paying customers and offers them highly professional training in world-class apprentice programmes.”



QA - outstanding



From left: Sports lecturer Mark Lampard, Sport Makers representative Stuart Butler and sports lecturer William Lee

Sports coaching volunteers keep the flame burning

More than 150 students completed at least 10 hours of voluntary sports coaching, as part of a national initiative to involve more people in sport.

The MidKent College learners have been taking part in the Sport Makers initiative, which aims to use the London Olympics' legacy to encourage more people to volunteer.

Stuart Butler, Sport Makers lead for Kent,

presented the college with a photograph of the Olympic cauldron, signed by five-time gold medallist Sir Steve Redgrave, in recognition of their efforts.

He said: "MidKent College has given tremendous support to the project."

Sport lecturer Mark Lampard said: "Hopefully our students will be inspired through their achievements with Sport Makers for many years to come."



MP Margot James with Luke Jones and Grace Dowling and two greetings cards featuring their design

Greeting cards are streets ahead

Stourbridge MP Margot James is confident her greetings cards will be streets ahead of other parliamentarians this Christmas, thanks to an innovative design by two students.

The MP challenged around 40 art and design learners from Birmingham Metropolitan College to come up with festive designs, which had to have a link with Stourbridge.

The image she chose for her cards was

created jointly by Grace Dowling and Luke Jones, both aged 18, which consisted of Stourbridge road names worked into the shape of a Christmas pudding.

Ms James said: "I'm delighted Grace and Luke were able to come up with such a unique concept, which also looked so striking."

Grace said: "Seeing one of our ideas transformed into a finished product is a really great feeling."

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FE Week campus round-up

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Middlesbrough College pantomime performers Alice Dowson, aged 18, who plays Queen Kate, Katie Simpson, who is playing Cinderella, and Prince George Charming, aka Jared Worrall, both 17. Inset: 16 year old Jack Norman of Marton pictured at Middlesbrough College on the Production Arts BTEc National Diploma. Photography by Michelle Maddison Photography

Lighting up college panto stars

Making sure Cinderella stays firmly in the spotlight is a dream come true for Middlesbrough College student Jack Norman.

The 16-year-old, from Marton, is lighting controller for this year's college pantomime having landed a job backstage at Middlesbrough Theatre.

Jack is a student on Middlesbrough College's production arts course and will be

lighting up fellow learners Katie Simpson, aged 17, who is playing Cinderella, Alice Dowson, 18, who plays Queen Kate and Prince George Charming, aka 17-year-old Jared Worrall.

"It's all I've ever wanted to do, eventually I'd like to work in the West End," said Jack.

He added: "I love working in theatre but I've never wanted to perform which is why this course is perfect for me."

Focused on the future of healthcare



Health and social care students with members of the Bracknell and Ascot Clinical Commissioning Group

Health and social care students from Bracknell and Wokingham College debated the future of the National Health Service (NHS) with influential new health commissioners.

They joined in a focus group for the Bracknell and Ascot Clinical Commissioning Group (BACCG).

The GP-led organisation was recently put in charge of buying health services for the people of Bracknell and Ascot, through the

government's NHS reforms.

The aim of the session was to give students a chance to debate issues, such as how limited funding available to the NHS should be best-spent, with BACCG members.

Louise Kirkham, co-ordinator of health and social care at the college, said: "This focus group was great because it really helped students understand the issues and thoughts behind the provision of NHS services."

Olympian Louis inspires apprentices to go for gold



Chris Evans, Mark Hodgetts, from Media Links Online, with his apprentice, winner of the Apprentice of the Year from 3aaa's Tamworth Academy, Abigail Jackson, aged 19, and Louis Smith

British Olympian Louis Smith and TV and radio host Chris Evans attended a special event at the House of Commons to celebrate hardworking apprentices.

The event, hosted by apprenticeship ambassador for business, Gordon Birtwistle MP, recognised outstanding apprentices and employers with 3aaa.

Presenter Chris and Olympic silver medal-winning gymnast Louis inspired the audience with stories of how hard work and focus

allowed them to reach the top of their careers, and handed out awards to the most dedicated apprentices.

Director of 3aaa Di McEvoy-Robinson said: "The magnificent surroundings of the Palace of Westminster was a super backdrop for this celebration of apprenticeships and made it a very special day for those apprentices and employers whose commitment we were recognising."

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new and who's leaving

Members of the Federation of Awarding Bodies (Fab) have elected a new chair.

Fiona Ballantine Dykes, head of qualifications at the Counselling & Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body (CPCAB), replaces Isabel Sutcliffe, who resigned to concentrate on her secondment to Pearson India, where she is interim director for the Centre for Assessment, Research and Evaluation.

A spokesperson for Fab, whose members include City & Guilds and Prince's Trust, said: "Fiona has been on our board since 2007 and so she will already be well known to many in the awarding body community."

"Since her time on the board she has chaired the Qualifications Issues Group and what was then the Membership and Communications Group. More recently she has been Fab's vice chair."



Mrs Ballantine Dykes, aged 55, said: "Fab should celebrate the wide and varied nature of the many different kinds of awarding body members that it represents — small specialist niche, sector specific, medium sized, professional bodies, large generalist and country specific — this wealth of

experience, expertise and diversity is one of the key features and key assets of the awarding body community in the UK.

"I look forward to forging a clear path ahead for Fab with a view to building further Fab's credibility and influence with stakeholders and partners."

She added: "I do not think that we should shy away from areas of poor practice where they exist but should recognise these honestly and see Fab as a vehicle for sharing expertise and developing best practice for the benefit of all."

Send your stories with pictures to news@feweek.co.uk including names, ages and course of students where applicable

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your college or training provider, please let us know by emailing news@feweek.co.uk

College's most deprived students won't go hungry this Christmas

The festive season can be a depressing time for students without a stable family home to return to, which is why staff at City College Plymouth are collecting for hampers full of food, toiletries and warm clothes for their most deprived youngsters, writes Paul Offord.

Staff at City College Plymouth could not stand the thought of impoverished young students going hungry while they enjoyed Christmas dinner with their families.

They decided to take action after hearing heartbreaking stories from young people who had no family to turn to, or in some cases even a home to stay in over the festive season.

A team of volunteers led by Julie McLean, director of work-based learning and school partnerships at the college, started collecting food, toiletries and warm clothes to be packed into festive hampers for the most deprived learners three years ago.

The idea that they should receive at least one Christmas present, which could help feed them throughout the holidays, caught on with generous staff from across the college who have donated more and more each festive season.

Julie hopes there will be enough donations this year for at least 30 hampers, which would be a record.

She said: "It all came about when we realised we had students who wouldn't have anything to eat over Christmas.

"Staff were bringing in things for them and

we thought 'there are probably a lot more who need help'.

"When you have a young person who is only 16 or 17 years old and they tell you they aren't going to have anything to eat over Christmas it is quite upsetting, especially when you have a lovely family at home."

Julie's team has made-up around 60 hampers over the last three years.

She hopes to be able to make more than ever before this year, because staff from private firm Princess Yachts International will also be donating.

Justine Foccone, the company's training and development manager, said: "Being able to support the Christmas hamper collection is a real honour.

"Our staff are keen to show support and collection points are being made available across all our Plymouth sites to ensure that we collect as much as possible."

Julie said the college's teachers are were-placed to identify students most in need of help. She said: "Our staff have a rapport with students and we rely on them to tell us if they think a student is struggling.

"We have to very careful that we don't offend them. Some haven't got a lot but they are very proud.

"We try to be very sensitive through their



Lecturers Danielle Welton and April Howell packing hampers. Inset top: Lauren Clark, aged 17, receiving a hamper last year from College director of work-based learning and school partnerships Julie McLean. Inset bottom: Ms McLean, Princess Yachts training and development manager Justine Foccone and college head of corporate relations, employability and enterprise Sharron Robbie

tutors, who ask them if they would like a little bit of help.

"It could be young people who may have just come out of the care system, or they may be completely disengaged from their families. Some of them are homeless, but perhaps staying in a hostel.

"During term-time, we can at least make sure they have a good breakfast, which is free for all students at the college, but we don't know what happens to them outside of term time."

The hampers were due to be given out on December 12 and any items donated after that go to charities including The Salvation Army.

Julie said: "I think people forget there are a lot of young people out there at Christmas who just don't have the family support. It can actually be a lonely and sad time and suicide rates go up.

"The hampers make a real difference and every year I am blown away by the support shown by the staff at the college."

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Interview date will be: **Tuesday 7 January 2014**

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This post is particularly about moving our Teaching, Learning and Assessment to the next level on the College's journey to excellence. We have a robust observation process that has led to a very strong teaching, learning and assessment profile and high success rates. The successful applicant will have a proven track record of the highest quality teaching experience as well as motivation, innovation and creativity and the ability to oversee a thoroughly comprehensive and meticulous system of recording, tracking and follow up.

OVERALL PURPOSE OF JOB

- To support the College in aspiring to excellence in teaching, learning & assessment
- To drive continuous improvement through quality assurance, training & development & procedures, as well as management & co-ordination where required
- To drive innovation through up to date research, development & networking activities

Shipleigh College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults and expects all staff to share this commitment. The College is actively committed to a policy of equality of opportunity for all through education and therefore encourages applications from all regardless of age, disability, economic status, gender, race, religion and beliefs or sexual orientation. Successful candidates will be required, where appropriate, to undergo a Disclosure and Barring service (DBS) Disclosure Check.

HOW TO APPLY - You can download an application pack from our College website www.shipleigh.ac.uk or alternatively to request an application pack, please contact: Shipleigh College, Central Support on 01274 327395/6 or email jobs@shipleigh.ac.uk. Completed application forms should be returned to jobs@shipleigh.ac.uk or alternatively by post to Central Support, Shipleigh College, Salt Building, Victoria Road, Saltaire, BD18 3LQ.

If you wish to have an informal chat before making an application, please contact; **Julie Bales** (Vice Principal - Curriculum) on; jbales@shipleigh.ac.uk



Closing Date - 12.00 noon Monday 6 January 2014 Interview Date - Thursday 16 January 2014 Start Date - ASAP



The Royal National College for the Blind

Education, employment and empowerment

The leading Residential College of Further Education and Training for people who are Blind or Partially Sighted

Applications are invited for the following position:

TEACHER OF HUMANITIES (job share considered) SALARY : £22779- £27077

RNC is seeking to appoint an enthusiastic Teacher of Sociology and Psychology to join its A Level team.

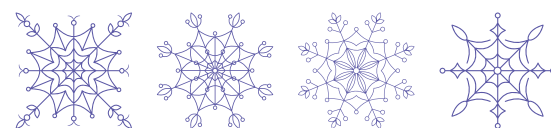
For an application form and supporting information visit our website www.rnc.ac.uk, alternatively e-mail hr@rnc.ac.uk or tel HR Recruitment Line 01432 376380 providing your full details.

RNC is an equal opportunities employer welcoming applications from all sections of the community. We are committed to safeguarding and all successful applicants will be subject to an enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service, formerly CRB) check. Eligibility to work in the UK is required.

Closing date: Monday 6 January 2014 at 5:00 pm



To advertise
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020 81234 778



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A new approach to interim and project support for the education sector, from Tenet

Due to continuing strong demand, we are actively seeking new interim candidates. Experienced sector managers in the following disciplines are urgently required:

- **Finance** (Management Accountant through to Deputy Principal)
- **MIS** (Managers and Directors, technically focussed or strategic)
- **IT** (Service delivery management and forward strategy)
- **Estates** (Service delivery management)

If you fit this description, register with www.interim4fe.com and upload your CV. This web-based approach brings candidate information on-line and puts you in charge of the data you present to potential employers.



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middlesbrough college

Fantastic College

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Are you looking for an exciting challenge and an opportunity to work with a forward thinking College?



DRIVING AMBITION INSPIRING SUCCESS

Middlesbrough College engages with over 12,000 students each year in the widest range of subject areas and as such is the largest provider of Further Education in the Tees Valley.

Middlesbrough College is a thriving and buoyant institution recruiting record numbers of full-time students, achieving consistently strong examination results and gaining its reputation and profile as a major 'player' in the Tees Valley and beyond, raising standards and economic prospects across the region. Middlesbrough College is ambitious for its community and place inclusion and excellence at the heart of its core values. The College moved to its 'state of the art' building in 2008 and has opened a £7 million Sixth Form Centre (MC6) in 2012 and invests over £1.5 million every year in capital resources. This record of achievement is delivered by the College's most prized asset, its staff.

Further investment is planned by 2015 with a purpose built £12 million STEM Centre which will align its curriculum to the demands of local and regional industries in our region.

All appointments are subject to a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check and receipt of two satisfactory references.

Middlesbrough College is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

Director of Programme Computing and Visual & Performing Arts

£41,028 - £48,259
Full-Time, Permanent

Middlesbrough College is seeking to appoint a Director of Computing and Visual & Performing Arts to work alongside the newly appointed Digital and Creative Director.

Middlesbrough is fast becoming a hub for digital innovation and the College is looking to enhance its offer to students and employers by growing this Directorate and in doing so has invested in its management and delivery teams.

The Visual & Performing Arts Directorate has recently merged with the Computing Department and together they have fantastic facilities, industry led staff, good success rates and a rapidly growing community focus, working with regional and national organisations to showcase the talents of its students.

The College is looking for an individual with the commitment and proven skill set, who can build on the current position and continue to drive forward this area of provision (quality and operational).

You will need to be able to demonstrate dynamic leadership and management qualities, a strong track record in continuous improvement and a commitment to excellence.

If you feel you have the right qualities and share our values, then the College would love to hear from you.

Director of Programme Construction & Building Services

£41,028 - £48,259
Full-Time, Permanent

Middlesbrough College is seeking to appoint a Director of Construction & Building Services.

This grade 1 directorate is highly successful, with growing student numbers across all disciplines and has outstanding success rates, fantastic facilities and significant employer and community focus through its MC BUILD brand.

The College is looking for an individual with the commitment and proven skill set, who can build on the current position and continue to drive forward this area of provision (academic and commercial training).

You will need to be able to demonstrate dynamic leadership and management qualities, a strong track record in continuous improvement and a commitment to excellence.

If you feel you have the right qualities and share our values, then the College would love to hear from you.

G GAZELLE
colleges

For an information pack including an Online Application Form please visit the College Website www.mbro.ac.uk

If you have any queries, please contact Human Resources Team on 01642 333554.

Closing date: 12.00 noon on Thursday 2 January 2014

INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE | Gold

LOWESTOFT
COLLEGE

Lowestoft College are recruiting

Further details and an application pack may be obtained from
www.lowestoft.ac.uk – 01502 525152 or by email to
recruitment@lowestoft.ac.uk

Lowestoft College is an equal opportunities employer and especially welcomes applications from under represented groups.

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Can you help with their mission to achieve excellence and change lives?

They are currently seeking experienced Training Advisors in the following regions:

- Midlands
- South East
- South West

Additionally they are seeking two Employability Tutors in the following regions:

- Yorkshire
- Lancashire

For a full job description and salary details, please email Jenni Dodsworth at jennid@hco.co.uk

What's on Your Christmas Wish List?

At ABC Awards we are committed to responding to the needs of our customers, and we are delighted to offer a fantastic range of products and services to support you and your learners.

Employability Programme - over 2,000 units

Our brand new Employability Programme offers centres the flexibility and choice to develop individual programmes which are tailored to meet the needs of learners and employers.

Employment Related Services Qualifications

We offer a suite of Level 3 and 4 Employment Related Services qualifications which are designed for staff who are involved in advising and supporting young people and adults into work.

Quality Licence Scheme

Our Quality Licence Scheme allows training providers and other organisations to apply for endorsement from ABC Awards for programmes or training materials which are not aligned to regulated qualifications.

Functional Skills

We are working in partnership with SQA to offer Functional Skills qualifications in Maths, English and Information and Communications Technology at Level 1 and 2.

New website for 2014

We are currently developing a brand new website which will be launched in the new year. Watch this space!

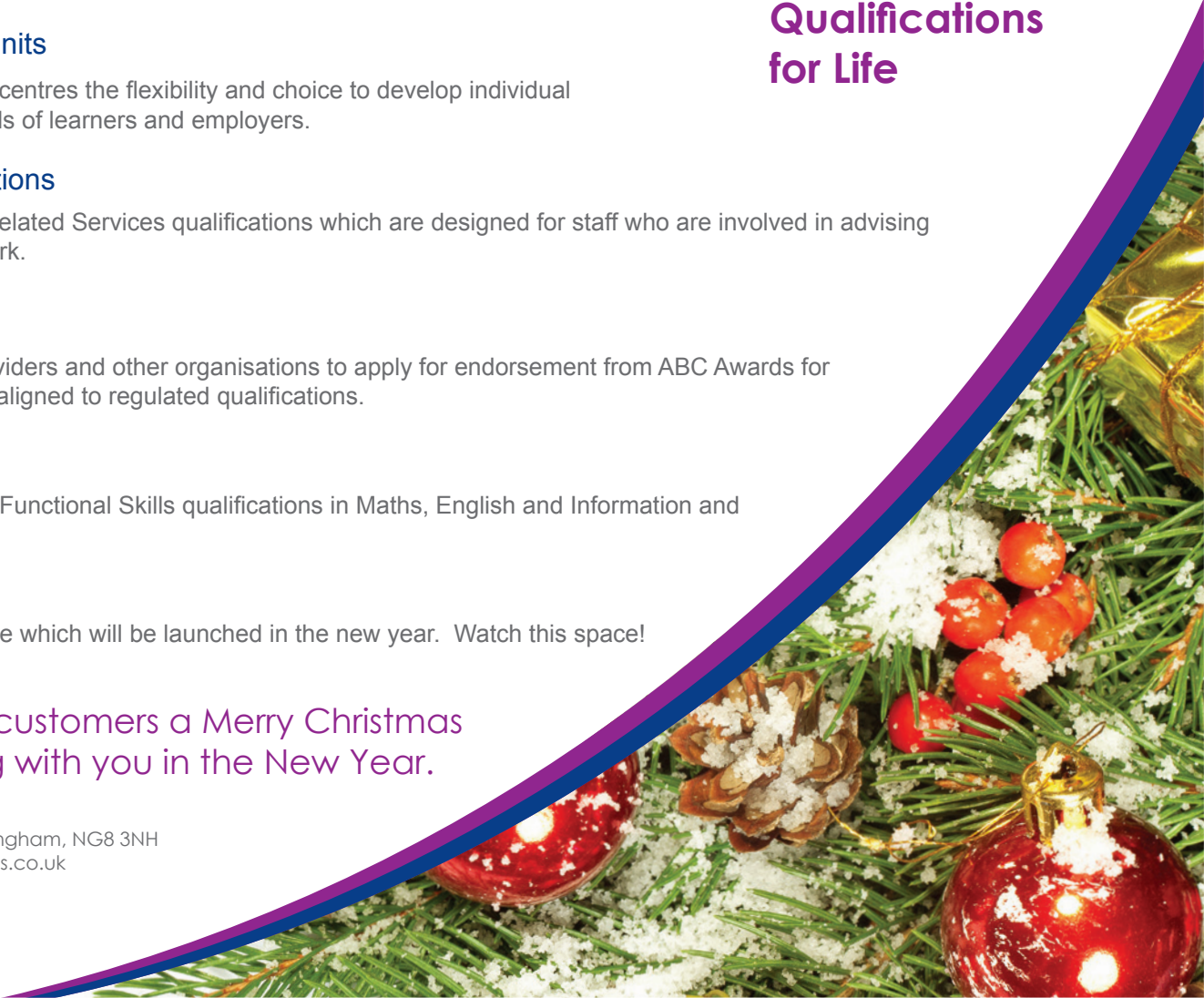
We would like to wish all of our customers a Merry Christmas and we look forward to working with you in the New Year.

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Awarding
Qualifications
for Life



FE Week Sudoku challenge

	4	9	7					
			9	6			1	
2	8			5				
6	2			1				9
	5						8	
8				3			5	2
				9			4	5
	6			4	5			
					3	1	9	

Difficulty:
EASY

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

Solutions: Next week

9					1		5	2
4					8	3		
	6	1				8		
6	9		5		7			
				8				
			3		6		2	7
		6				5	9	
		2	1					6
8	4		7					3

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Last Week's solutions

8	4	6	7	2	5	3	1	9
9	3	2	6	4	1	5	8	7
5	7	1	3	9	8	2	4	6
1	2	4	5	3	7	9	6	8
3	8	5	1	6	9	7	2	4
6	9	7	2	8	4	1	3	5
7	6	8	9	1	2	4	5	3
4	1	9	8	5	3	6	7	2
2	5	3	4	7	6	8	9	1

Difficulty:
EASY

5	4	1	6	8	3	2	9	7
6	9	7	4	1	2	3	5	8
3	2	8	7	9	5	6	4	1
7	6	3	8	5	1	4	2	9
1	8	4	9	2	6	5	7	3
9	5	2	3	7	4	1	8	6
8	3	5	2	6	9	7	1	4
2	7	6	1	4	8	9	3	5
4	1	9	5	3	7	8	6	2

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

FE Week mini-mascot

One last message from FE Week's biggest and smallest fan!



“Mostly this week I’ve been looking forward to Christmas”